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ABSTRACT

The Action-Communication-Expression program, an extension of a speech communication class in a Houston (Texas) high school, involves visual and concrete communication, such as photography, script writing, and filmmaking. Students in two speech classes work in small groups of four or five, independently of the teacher, after receiving initial information and instructions. Students devise a theme for a photographic essay and then take required camera shots around the school grounds, eventually presenting their photo-essays to the class. They also study television, print media, and advertising, for which they create their own advertising layouts and film commercials. Cameras for the photographic project belong to the students, while film and flash cubes are supplied by a speech fund. The film cameras belong to the speech department, and outside resources include local television studios, newspapers, and libraries. This program provides students with new avenues of creative self-expression. (An outline of the course is included.) (HOD)

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Houston's Teacher-to-Teacher Network

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Ace:

Action-Communication-Expression

Developer: Margie McIntyre

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IMPACT II: HOUSTON'S TEACHER-TO-TEACHER NETWORK

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High School/Language Arts -

ACE: ACTION-COMMUNICATION-EXPRESSION

The Program

ACTION-COMMUNICATION-EXPRESSION is an extension of Margie McIntyre's speech communication class and includes visual and concrete means of communication such as photography, script writing, and film making. Last year she began experimenting with the program which she now implements in her speech classes. Her students study television and print media and devise a theme for a photographic essay. Once this theme has been determined, the students take the required camera shots around the school grounds. This exercise is a prelude to learning camera techniques for film making. The students eventually present their photo-essays to the class. The students also study advertising, both print and televised, and create their own advertising layouts and filmed commercials. When the actual filming begins, the students work outdoors, in the auditorium, and in various other locations around the school. Margie McIntyre's program offers much more than a regular speech class does: It provides her students with the opportunity to study the art of film, to write scripts, and to film their own shows.

The Students

ACTION-COMMUNICATION-EXPRESSION involved approximately 65 students in two speech classes in the study of all mass media. The classes were ethnically mixed and met five days a week from January through May. The students worked in small groups of four or five, depending on class size, and after receiving initial information and instructions, they worked independently of the teacher.

The Staff

Margie McIntyre, a teacher with ten years of experience, developed this program in order to attract more students to the Speech Department. Her program has been so successful that it evolved into an independent course entitled Communication Skills which is devoted entirely to the study of media and film making. If this course continues to be successful, further media courses may grow out of the original plan. The developer of the program is supported by the administration of Stephen F. Austin High School.

Materials and Facilities

The activities of this program take place in a regular classroom and around the campus. Cameras for the photographic project belong to the students. Film and flash cubes are supplied by the speech fund, and two Super 8MM Sound Movie Cameras, previously purchased by the Speech Department, are used in the film-making venture.

Outside Resources

Margie McIntyre's students toured the station facilities of Channel 11 (KHOU-TV) last semester, and one student group toured the Houston Chronicle. As part of an on-going mass media project, speakers from various radio and television stations spoke to the class about career opportunites and the nature of the industry. One group of students presented a history of film using films from the Houston Public Library, and another group presented a history of music using taped excerpts of popular and classical music.

Overall Value

"In my opinion, the program gives speech students new avenues of creative self-expression," says its developer. "It acquaints them with print and broadcast media, introduces them to the many career opportunities available to them within these fields, and makes them more aware of advertising techniques." More importantly, this program brings about a drop in absenteeism and generates a feeling of exhilaration and interest in the tasks at hand.

More Information

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A4-022

TEXTS USED:

1. Understanding Mass Media, by Jeffrey Schrank National Textbook Company, Skokie, Ill. $10.50

2. Moviemaking Illustrated, by James Morrow and Murray Suid, Hayden Book Co., Inc., Rochelle Park, N.J. $ 6.50

EQUIPMENT USED:

a) Television Set (available on most campuses)
b) Student Cameras: Polaroid Land; 110 Instamatic: 135 MM.
c) Super 8MM Sound Movie Camera: Tripod
d) Film for all cameras

TELEVISION & PHOTOGRAPHY:

1) To begin the photography unit, explain the Camera Shots, used both in photography and in film making.

Using a person as the subject to be photographed, they are:

Ref: Moviemaking Illustrated Chapter 2 "Shots"

. . . Long Shot (L.S.). . . The subject from feet to head and the surrounding background.

. . . Mid Shot (M.S.) . . . The subject from the waist or below the waist to head, with little background showing.

. . . 3/4 Shot (3/4) . . . The subject from mid-calf to head, with little background showing.

. . . Angle Shot (A.S.) . . The subject photographed from above or below at an angle.

Ref: UMM, Chapter 1 "Television" & Chapter 3 "Film"

. . . Close Up (C.U.) . . . The subject from below neck or mid-chest to head. . . almost no background showing.

. . . Tight Close Up (T.C.U.) . . . The mask of the face, the hand or foot or any object at extreme close range.

2) So that students will become familiar with camera shots, angles, and movements, allow them to watch television shows and to identify the shots within the story portion of the show. As they watch the show, they can keep a record of how many different camera shots there are in each story portion. Students should be made

aware of the fact that the camera work serves the story's ideas and theme. For example, fast cuts (rapid movement from one subject to another) are used in rapid dialogue, and in comedic situations; slow camera movements are used in dramatic or serious situations, etc. This information will be helpful when filming.

3) Have students study TV log from the daily newspaper. Then, they should design their own 18-hour TV program day (from 6 A.M. to midnight). When designing the programs, students should be made aware of the audience members who watch TV at specific times of the day. A balance of one-half hour, one hour, and one and one-half to two hour programs should be required. No existing program names or actor's real names should be used The students must create their own.

From these program ideas, which you consider produceable on your own campus, will come the development of the film script and the story-board.

4) When students are familiar with camera angles and shots, have them form groups of 4 or 5. They are ready to decide on a theme for their photo essays. Some themes that can easily be photographed around campus are:

Ref:

Any books on your campus on Photography

The contrast/comparison theme, e.g.

...student's dress vs. teacher's dress
...teacher's cars vs. student's cars
...graffitti around school
...students breaking school rules
...litter around school
...cafeteria food

The most practical camera to use is a Polaroid Land Camera...which most students own. Assign 10 pictures (total pictures in a Polaroid pack). Assign 2 each of the camera shots studied with a choice of the 3/4 or angle shot.

Students must then agree upon which camera shots to use to illustrate each idea; each camera shot should be carefully thought out to match whatever themes are to be illustrated.

5) Next, students should be sent out in pairs only -- one to shoot and one to record what

is done that day. Ideally, each person in the group should be given the opportunity to use the camera.

6) After all photos are taken, method of presentation to the class is considered. Photos may be mounted on poster board, titled, and captioned. Then, a written report explaining the project is presented to the class, with all in the group making the presentation.

ADVERTISING:

Ref:
UMM,
Chapter 2
"Advertising"

1) Television commercials and printed commercials (ads) in newspapers may be studied.

2) Ads are studied for their nature of appeal, truthfulness, or deceptiveness.

3) Students then learn to create their own product and an advertising layout, which the entire class will evaluate.

4) Students may also intersperse commercials, which they have written, into their film shows.

FILM MAKING (Script and Storyboard):

1) Students should again work in groups of 4 or 5, depending upon class size.
2) Once groups are formed, students should compare their TV programs (especially the ones marked produceable by teacher) and decide upon which one they would like to produce.
3) Characters are then created, setting discussed, themes discussed, and scripts are ready to be written -- by the group.
4) After the teacher has checked the first draft of the script for theme and language, the students are ready to write the final film script.
5) As soon as the final script is completed, the students are ready to begin to develop their storyboard (matching Video, Audio, and Picture).
6) When Storyboard is completed, students should then mark their scripts with the appropriate camera shots and movements.
7) Filming should then be scheduled and begun.

NOTE: This project in its entirety takes the entire semester. Any portion may take from two to three weeks.

2nd NOTE:

1) One Super 8MM film cartridge has 50 ft. of film, or about 3 1/2 minutes running time.
2) One handwritten page (assume, notebook paper on both sides) of dialogue and stage directions of the script is approximately one to one-half minutes.

3rd NOTE:

1) Each section may be done as a separate unit, yet each is interrelated.
2) Television and Television commercials may be done as a writing assignment, for critical evaluation of television and its commercials, or for a study of dramatic form.
3) Advertising may be studied, both print or television, as an art project, or a writing project.
4) Photography may be studied as an art project, a writing project, a Demonstration Speech, or as a part of the film project.
5) Filming may be studied as an artproject, a Speech project, a Drama project, or a creative writing project.